

Available EAP Services:

[How to Receive EAP Services](#) | [Webinars](#) | [EAP Brochures/ Guides](#)
[Supervisor / HR Resources](#) | [Subscribe to EAP News](#)

Question:

I want to be a firm supervisor when necessary as well as a nice person that my employees will admire. I think most supervisors feel the same way, but I find myself correcting employees more often than I praise them. How can I increase my positive interactions?

Answer:

Researchers in the field of couple's therapy found that the "magic ratio" of positive to negative interactions is 5:1. That means that for every time you are critical or negative towards a partner, it takes 5 instances of praise or positive interaction to restore balance to the relationship. Apply that same science to your working relationships. While corrections are inevitable and direct feedback is best, we have a basic human need to have that balanced out with five times as much positive feedback!

Here are some suggestions of ways to add more positive interactions into your relationships with employees: Establish communication habits to use daily with employees that help you improve your interactions and grow your reputation with them. When approaching an employee for any reason, lead with something positive so they do not learn to associate your presence with correcting performance, a negative interaction, or other painful exchange. Ask employees for their solutions to problems, and treat them like pros, regardless of the position they hold. Intentionally interact with your employees when things are going well—get out of your office so you aren't seen as a one-person fire department only interacting when problems arise or things go badly. Participate in small talk; use these moments to learn about your employees' needs. Praise and be in awe of their past achievements, not just the ones you witness on the job. Finally, look for roadblocks to their success. Pay attention to what is impeding performance, and find small ways to make their lives more comfortable.

Frontline Supervisor

Question:

Upon discharge from an alcoholism treatment program, my employee was allowed to come to work late twice per week, and to have extended lunches twice per week. I'm worried. What if coworkers are confused and ask questions since attendance issues were what led them into treatment?

Question:

There is usually a lot of tension when I conduct annual reviews. If employees are surprised by the results or if their scores are less than they imagined they would be, I often face hostility and anger. How can I reduce this tension?

Answer:

It is more than likely that your employee is participating in certain Alcoholics Anonymous meetings that are not available after hours. You can't discuss the employee's health issues, but the reason for their absence is unlikely to remain secret for long, because it is likely that the employee will share this information with their coworkers. This is part of the normal recovery experience. Aftercare programs often view sharing one's diagnosis and responding to inquiries by others as opportunities to practice acceptance of the diagnosis as a recovering person. Acknowledging being in recovery is considered a positive thing, not something for which to feel shame. You are probably unlikely to get any questions from coworkers. But if you do, in this scenario it is appropriate to refer inquiries from others to your employee.

Answer:

Follow the performance review process of your organization, but make the effort to increase communication. Meet with your employees at the beginning of the year and discuss with them what they would like to achieve in the coming year, along with other measures of performance consistent with the goals of your work unit and the organization as a whole. These goals should be achievable and measurable and include defined criteria for outstanding performance and lesser achievement. Meet several times during the year and coach employees toward success. Put these meetings on the calendar now to make sure they happen in regular intervals. This will also give both you and your employees a visual reminder that performance management is an ongoing process, not a yearly task to check off. Ask employees each time, during these meetings, how they would grade themselves against the performance criteria you set together. At year's end, you should see far less angst at performance review time, more satisfied workers, and higher levels of achievement that benefit the organization.



WASHINGTON STATE